
A N
ORATION

DELIVERED

MARCH 5th 1781.

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AN
ORATION
DELIVERED
MARCH 5th 1781
AT THE
REQUEST OF THE INHABITANTS
OF THE
TOWN OF BOSTON,
TO
COMMEMORATE THE BLOODY TRAGEDY
OF THE
FIFTH OF MARCH 1770.

By THOMAS DAWES, Jun^r. *R*

"Patria cara—carior Libertas!"

B O S T O N :

PRINTED by THOMAS AND JOHN FLEET.
M,DCC,LXXXI.

AT a Meeting of the Freeholders and other Inhabitants of the Town of BOSTON, duly qualified and legally warned, in public Town-Meeting assembled at Faneuil-Hall, on Monday the Fifth Day of March, A. D. 1781.

VOTED, That John Brown, Esq;
John Scollay, Esq;
Mr. Nathan Frazier,
Samuel Barret, Esq;
Ezekiel Price, Esq;
Ebenezer Hancock, Esq;
Mr. Tuthil Hubbard,

Be and hereby are appointed a Committee to wait upon Mr. THOMAS DAWES, Jun. and in the Name of the Town to thank him for the spirited and elegant ORATION delivered by him at their Request, in Commemoration of the horrid Massacre perpetrated on the Evening of the Fifth of March 1770, by a Party of Soldiers of the XXIXth British Regiment, under the Command of Capt. Thomas Preston, and to request of him a Copy thereof for the Press.

Attest. WILLIAM COOPER, Town Clerk.

GENTLEMEN!

I Obey the Request with which you have this Day honoured me—hoping that such Benevolence will now receive, as attended the hearing this imperfect Production.

I am, Gentlemen,

With all possible Respect,

Your obedient Servant,

THOMAS DAWES, Juniors.

BOSTON, March 5, 1781.

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FATHERS, FRIENDS AND CITIZENS!

AVOIDING apology, even at a time when uncommon propriety might justify it; and trusting rather to a continuance of the same liberality which has ever noted my countrymen, I *attempt* the duties of this solemn anniversary.

AND it is *conceived* that we shall in some measure perform those duties, if we sketch out some general traits of Liberty and mark the lines of her progress in particular nations; if we paint the wounds She has suffered from corruption and despotick force, and from the whole educe such sentiments as become a brave and free, though injured people.

NUMEROUS

NUMEROUS as the descriptions are of primeval man, the reflective eye is not yet weary. We still feel an interest in that Arcadian state which so well imitated the world we are looking for. And we shall continue to feel it so long as Nature is pleasing and the heart retains a feature of innocence. Like the gods,* our first fathers had but few desires and those to be satisfied by the works of virtue. Their passions were as the gales of their own Eden—enough to give a spring to *good* actions—to keep the waters of life in motion without inducing storm and whirlwind.† Conversing with divinities, Liberty, sent from above, was their peculiar inmate: that Liberty, whose spirit, mingling with the nature of man at his formation, taught him, unlike the other animals, to look upward and hope for a throne above the stars:‡ that Liberty who taught him to pluck with confidence the fruits of Nature; to pursue the direction of reason upon his heart and, *under that direction*, to acquire, secure and enjoy all possible happiness, not impeding but assisting others in the same

* It was represented of Marcus Aurelius, that in imitating the gods his study was to have as few wants as possible. Vid. Spectator No. 634.

† The passions of every kind, under proper restraints, are the gentle breezes which keep life from stagnation; but, let loose, they are the storms and whirlwinds which tear up all before them. Mrs. Brooke.

‡ Pronaque cum spectant animalia cætera terram,
Os homini sublime dedit, cælumque tueri
Jussit. Ovid. Met.

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same privilege. ‡ When families and consequently human wants were afterward multiplied, it was this same Liberty who, joined with Justice, led the patriarchs to some aged oak. There in the copious shade misunderstandings were explained and charity and peace kissed each other. Such was the morning of man.

BUT misunderstandings are quarrels in embryo. Satisfaction of one want originated another. Depravity grew enraptured with strife. The wind was up. Passion raged. Brother's blood then smok'd from the ground and cried for vengeance. Nimrod commenced his prelude to tyranny, and Fame was clamorous with the deeds of death. Liberty heard and trembled—considered herself an outcast and has on many times since travelled up and down the world, forlorn, forsaken, majesty in rags. Nor will She, perhaps, until the millenium comes, if America does not now retain her, ever command that complete and permanent homage which is suitable to her nature. The old republics may have been the most perfect seats of her residence while they lasted, and are often mustered up from the tomb of empire to witness the adoration which they paid her. But even there she received so frequent violence that the continuance of her reign was for the most part precarious; and when even at the summit of her glory, she was only elevated that her fall might be more astonishing.

Having

‡ No man's social liberty is lessened by another's enjoying the same. Bolla.

Having passed all the degrees of fortune, thank God She has found her way to these remote shores: and, if from effects we may judge, She is well pleased with her new abode. O cherish the divine inhabitant! O let her not return to the courts above with a story that shall fire the heavens against us—that *She* had blessings for us; but that *we* were not prepared to receive them—that She could find among us no lasting habitation; but that, like the dove after the deluge, She was scarce favoured with the top of some friendly mountain for a melancholy moment.

LIBERTY, my friends! is a palladium to the place of her dwelling, a rock and a sure defence. Wherever She is, every man has something to protect. He knows what are his riches, and that while he liveth himself shall gather them. He views with conscious joy his circumstance. His social affections shoot out and flourish. Even his prejudices are a source of satisfaction, and among them local attachment, a fault which leans to the side of patriotism.*

SUPPORTED by and tenacious of these fruits of Liberty, some little free states, which the geographer in his map had *otherwise* never noticed, have long stood uninjured by change and some of them inaccessible by the greatest efforts of Power. There is now in a distant quarter of the globe a living illustration of this remark. Situate upon a venerable pile of
rocks

* And even his failings lean'd to virtue's side, Goldsmith.

rocks in Italy stands the Commonwealth of St. Marino. It was founded by a holy man whose name it bears, and who fled to this romantick fairy-land to enjoy religion and free air, unpursued by power and the restless spirit of the world. His example was followed by the pious, the humane and the lovers of freedom. And these, a favorite few, who were before scattered up and down thro' other parts of Italy; who had lived all their days under arbitrary rule and whom Nature had secretly taught that there was somewhere a happier institution for man—these hurried away to the snowy top of St. Marino: And having there first tasted those rights which come down from God, made it their *life's labor* to support and hand them down in purity. There every man finds his prosperity in submitting to those laws which diffuse equality. There every man feels himself happily liable to be called to the senate or the field: every man divides his day between alternate labor and the use of arms—on tip-toe, ready to start for the prize, the mark of universal emulation—the Commonwealth; officious to promote that interest which is at once the publick's and his own. So stands a constitution informed with the very essence of Liberty. It has stood, while other neighbouring states have been blackened and defaced with frequent revolution. And we prophesy that 'till the approach of some unforeseen vice—'till some degeneracy unknown to the fires creep upon the sons, St. Marino must stand admired: as, in its present circumstance, no prince or potentate, after

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sitting

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sitting down and counting the cost, will ever attempt the impenetrable union of so much prudence and virtue.*

THE name of Venice now occurs to memory as another modern example of genuine greatness. The ascendancy gained by that single city over the whole Ottoman power—the universal panic that struck and pervaded all orders of the Turks when routed at the Dardanelles, and the *reasonable* fear of approaching dissolution that reached even to the throne and blasted the heart and withered the nerves of a despot: These, amazing at first, nevertheless appear, when their springs are laid open, the natural issues of a contest between free agents and slaves.†

A more ancient and perhaps still more brilliant proof of the proportionate powers of different degrees of Liberty may be gathered from the annals of the city of Tyre. The Lybian madman ‡ who thought he had conquered all and wept that he had no more to conquer §—the invincible son of Jove, before whom principalities and powers had bowed down their

* Many of the facts here mentioned of St. Marino may be seen in Addison's more complete account of that republick.

† This alludes only to a particular era in the Venetian history.

‡ And the horn'd head bely'd the Lybian god, Pope.

§ Alexander after all his conquests complained that he had no more worlds to subdue.

Seneca of a happy life.

their heads as a bulrush—behold him with his phalanx puzzled and confounded at the walls of Tyre. To over-run Asia cost him less labor, enterprize and valor than the reduction of this one favorite haunt of Liberty.* And perhaps he had never reduced her but for her own falling off from her pristine wisdom. Her liberty was not in first full vigor, but had received a shock from corruption introduced with riches. Bribery, pride and oppression followed close behind. She was then cast out as prophane from the mountain of God.† Tyre is become like the top of a rock—a place to spread nets upon.

LET us consider the story of Tyre as a monument which upon one side shews the force of excellence, and upon the other the baneful influence of vice; a memento that every state below the sun has, like Achilles of old, some vulnerable part. As not a nation is exempted; and lest in a fond prejudice we might exclude our own America and so induce a fatal security, even America has received a caveat from Heaven, and in her youthful purity has been tempted by her enemies. With what sort of success tempted we need but remember the machinations and flight of the most infamous Arnold, and the affecting, tho' just separation of the unfortunate André.

HAPPY

* For an illustration of this see Ancient Universal History, Vol. II. page 75 and on; also—that part of Newton on the Prophecies which relates to Tyre, Vol. I.

† Ezekiel xxviii. 16.

HAPPY the nation that, apprized of the whole truth, impartially weighs it's own alloy and bars with tenfold adamant it's gate of danger. But to return,

I had cherished some aversion to names grown trite by repetition, and had, on that account, evaded the ancient republicks. But I find the observation just that "half our learning is their epitaph." I conceive that the "moss-grown" columns and broken arches of those once renowned empires are full with instruction as were the groves of Lycæum or the school of Plato. Let Greece then be the subject of a moment's reflection. When Liberty fled from the gloom of Egypt, she sought out and settled at infant Greece—there disseminated the seeds of greatness; there laid the ground-work of Republican glory. Simplicity of manners, piety to the gods, generosity and courage were her earliest character. "Human nature shot wild and free."* Penetrated with a spirit of industry, her sons scarcely knew of relaxation: even their sports were heroic. Hence that elevated, independent soul, that contempt of danger, that laudable byass to their country and its manners. Upon the banks of Eurota flourished her principal state. Frugality of living and an avarice of time were of the riches of Lacedæmon. Her maxims were drawn from Nature, and one was "that nothing which bore the name of Greek was born for slavery." From this idea flowed an assistance to her sister states.

From

* From Dr. Blair's dissertation upon the works of Ossian.

From a like idea in her sister states that friendship was returned in grateful measure. This, had it continued, would have formed the link of empire, the charm that would have united and made Greece invulnerable. While it lasted, the joint efforts of her states rendered her a name and a praise through the whole earth. And here, was it not for the sake of a lesson to my country, I would not only drop my elogium of Greece, but draw an impervious veil over her remaining history. Her tenfold lustre might at this day have blazed to heaven, had the union* of her states been held more sacred. But that union of her states, that cement of her existence once impaired—hear the

* Accuracy has been offended that this example is employed for the American States—which resemble each other in constitution and are united in their last resort; whereas the Grecian were unlike among themselves and professedly separate. But attention to the history of Greece will discover in the causes of her fall a lesson sufficiently apposite to our purpose. The anonymous translator of Tourneil writes as follows—
 “When Persia, so often vanquished by the *Grecians*, despaired of subduing them, her last shift was to divide ‘em; to which their prosperity opened her a means. Spirits naturally quick and too licentious, blown up with their frequent victories, could not contain themselves or govern their good fortune; they abandoned themselves to Jealousies and Ambition.**** These divisions ended at last in a general slavery.—”

Thomson most beautifully speaks the truth upon the same occasion.

— — — When Greece with Greece
 Embroil'd with foul contention, fought no more
 For common glory and for common weal:
 But, false to freedom, fought to quell the free;
 Broke the firm band of Peace, and sacred Love,
 That lent the whole irrefragable force;
 And, as around the *partial* trophy blush'd,
 Prepar'd the way for total overthrow!

the consequence ! The fury of civil-war blows her accursed clarion. The banners *late* of conquering Freedom now adorn the triumphs of Oppression. Those states which lately stood in mighty concert, invincible, now breath mutual jealousy and fall piece meal a prey to the common enemy. Attic wisdom, Theban hardihood, Spartan valor, would not combine to save her. That very army, which Greece had bred and nourished to reduce the Oriental pride, is turned vulture upon her own vitals—a damnable parricide, the sanction of a Tyrant. Behold the great and god-like Greece, with all her battlements and towers about her—borne headlong from her giddy height—the shame, the pity of the world.

HAVING attempted some general sketches of Liberty from the dawn of social life, to the fall of national glory ; I would be somewhat more particular upon those qualities to which her triumphs are chiefly indebted.

IN the vile oeconomy of depraved man there appears an inclination to bestow upon one part power and affluence, and to impose upon the other debility and woe. When that inclination is gratified, the majority being slaves, the remains of freedom are shared among the great ; like the triumphal bridge at the Archipelago, so strangely dignified that, by a decree of senate, none of the vulgar were suffered to enjoy it. When that inclination is counterbalanced by the laws ; when the
true

true interests of both those parts are reconciled ; when society is considered as " a publick combination for private protection"* —and the governed find their happiness in their submission—there is the essence of all-powerful Liberty. Not to wire-draw a sentiment already graven upon the hearts of this audience, it is such a Liberty, as that every man who has once tasted it, becomes a temporary soldier as soon as it is invaded and resents any violence offered it, as an attack upon his life—Hence it is that in free states *as such* there is no such thing as a perpetual standing army. For the whole body of the people, ever ready, flock to the general standard upon emergency, and so preclude the use of that infernal engine. I say *infernal engine*, for the tongue "*labors*, and is at a loss to express," the hideous and frightful consequences that flow wherever the powers of hell have procured its introduction. Turkey and Algiers are the delight of its vengeance. Denmark, once over-swarmed with the brave inhabitants of the North, has suffered depopulation, poverty and the heaviest bondage, from the quartering troops amongst their peasants in time of peace : *if it can be called peace*, when robbery, conflagration and murder are let loose upon the sons of men. Indeed, it is said that no nation ever kept up an army in time of peace that did not loose its liberties. I believe it. Athens, Corinth, Syracuse and Greece in general were all overturned by that tremendous power : and the same power has been long operating with other causes to humble the crest of Britain. Let us hear a passage from Davenant ! " If (says he, speaking of standing armies) if they who believed this

eagle

* Earl of Abingdon.

eagle in the air frighted all motions towards Liberty ; if they who heretofore tho't armies in time of peace and our freedom inconsistent ; if the same men should throw off a whig principle so fundamental, and thus come to clothe themselves with the detested garments of the tories, and if all that has been here discoursed on should happen, then will the constitution of this Country be utterly subverted."* It would exceed the limits of the present occasion to expatiate upon all the instances wherein the liberties of Britain have in fact suffered according to the views of Davenant. Suffice it to say that a standing army has been, long since, *virtually* engrafted a limb upon her constitution, has frequently over-awed her parliaments, *sometimes her elections*,† and has carried distraction and massacre‡ into different parts of her Empire.

THAT standing mercenary troops must sooner or later entail servitude and misery upon their employers is an eternal truth that appears from the nature of things. On the one hand behold an inspired yeomanry, all sinew and soul, having step'd out and defended their ancient altars, their wives and children, returning

* For the whole passage, which was too lengthy for our purpose, vide The works of Dr. Davenant, corrected by Whitworth, Vol. II. p. 333. Edition 1771.

† The Election of the Scotch Peers in the year 1735, and the misconduct of Blackerby and others at the election of the Westminster members in the year 1741, are instances well known. Vide Burgh's politic. disq. 2d Vol. p. 444 & 473.

‡ The affair of Capt. Porteus at Edinburgh (vide London Magazine for 1737, in a variety of pages) and of Capt. Preston at Boston, are of themselves sufficient examples.

returning in peace to till those fields which their own arms have rescued. Such are the troops of every free people.* Such were the troops who, led on by the patriot Warren, gave the first home-blow to our oppressors. Such were the troops who, fired by Gates in the northern woods, almost decided the fate of Nations. Such were the troops who, under the great and amiable Lincoln, sustained a siege in circumstances that rank him and them with the captains and soldiers of antiquity. Such, we trust, are the troops, who, inferior number, though headed indeed by the gallant and judicious Morgan, lately vanquished a chosen veteran band long dedicated to Mars and disciplined in blood. And such, we doubt not, are the troops who beat the British Legions from the Jerseys and have ever since preserved their country, under the conduct of that superior man who combines in quality the unshaken constancy of Cato, the triumphant delay of Fabius, and, upon proper occasions, the enterprizing spirit of Hannibal.

MAY the name of WASHINGTON continue steel'd, as it ever has been, to the dark slanderous arrow that flies in secret. *As it ever has been!* For who have offered to eclipse his
C glory,

* "That the yeomanry are the bulwark of a free people"—was, if memory serves, in a celebrated extempore speech of the honorable Samuel Adams, made in the year 1773. The steadiness of that great Republican to his political creed, evinces that sentiments grounded upon just data will not easily bend to a partial interest, or accommodate to the changes of popular opinion.

glory, but have afterward sunk away diminish'd, and "shorn of their own beams."——

JUSTICE to other characters forbids our stopping to gaze at this Constellation of Heroes, and would fain draw forth an eulogium upon all who have gathered true laurels from the fields of America.

"Thousands,——the tribute of our praise

"Demand ; but who can count the stars of heaven ?

"Who speak their influence on this lower world ?"*

WHITHER has our gratitude borne us ? Let us behold a contrast—the army of an absolute prince—a profession distinct from the citizen and in a different interest—a haughty phalanx, whose object of warfare is pay, and who, the battle over, and if perchance they conquer, return to slaughter the sons of peace. This is a hard saying. But does not all history press forward to assert its justice ? Do not the prætorian bands of tottering Rome now crowd upon the affrighted memory ? Do not the embodied guards from Petersburg and Constantinople stalk horrid, the tools of revolution and murder ? To come nearer home for an example—do we not see the darkened spring of 1770, like the moon in a thick atmosphere, rising in blood and ushered in by the figure of Britain plunging her ponyard in the young bosom of America ? Oh our bleeding country !

Was

* Thomson.

Was it for this our hoary fires sought thee through all the elements,* and having found thee sheltering away from the western wave, disconsolate, cheer'd thy sad face and deck'd Thee out like the garden of God? Time was when we could all affirm to this gloomy question—when we were ready to cry out that our fathers had done a vain thing. I mean upon that unnatural night which we now commemorate; when the fire of Brutus was on many a heart—when the strain of Gracchus was on many a tongue. “Wretch that I am, whither shall I retreat? Whither shall I turn me? To the Capitol? The Capitol swims in my brother's blood. To my family? There must I see a wretched, a mournful and afflicted mother?”——† Misery loves to brood over its own woes: and so peculiar were the woes of that night, so expressive the pictures of despair, so various the face of death,‡ that not all the grand tragedies, which have been since acted, can croud from our minds that æra of the human passions, that preface to the general conflict that now rages. May we never forget to offer a sacrifice to the manes of our brethren who bled so early at the foot of Liberty. Hitherto we have nobly avenged their fall: but as ages cannot expunge the debt, their melancholy ghosts still rise at a stated season, and will forever wander in the night of this noted anniversary. Let us then be frequent pilgrims at their tombs—there let us profit of all our feelings; and, while the senses are “struck deep with woe,” give wing to the imagination. Hark!
Even

* — elementa per omnia quæerunt. Juv.

† Guthrie's Cicero de Oratore.

‡ “Plurima Mortis Imago.”

Even now in the hollow wind I hear the voice of the departed.
*O ye, who listen to wisdom and aspire to immortality, as ye have
 avenged our blood, thrice blessed! As ye still war against the
 mighty hunters of the earth, your names are recorded in heaven!*

Such are the suggestions of fancy: And having given them their due scope; having described the memorable 5th of March as a season of disaster; it would be an impiety not to consider it in its other relation. For the rising honors of these States are distant issues, as it were, from the intricate* tho' all-wise Divinity which presided upon that night. Strike that night out of Time, and we quench the first ardor of a resentment which has been ever since increasing and now accelerates the fall of Tyranny. The provocations of that night must be numbered among the master-springs which gave the first motion to a vast machinery, a noble and comprehensive system of national Independence. "The Independence of America, says the writer under the signature of Common Sense, should have been considered as dating its Era from the first musquet that was fired against her." Be it so! But Massachusetts may certainly date many of its blessings from the Boston Massacre—a dark hour in itself, but from which a marvellous light has arisen. From that night Revolution became inevitable and the occasion commenced of the present most beautiful form of Government. We often read of the original Contract, and of mankind, in the early ages, passing

* "The ways of Heaven are dark and intricate." Addison's Cato.

passing from a state of Nature to immediate Civilization. But *what eye* could penetrate through gothic night and barbarous fable to that remote period. Such an eye, perhaps, was present, when the Deity conceived the Universe and fixed his compass upon the great deep.†

AND yet the people of Massachusetts have reduced to practice the wonderful theory. A numerous people have convened in a state of Nature, and, like *our ideas* of the patriarchs, have deputed a few fathers of the land to draw up for them a glorious covenant. It has been drawn. The people have signed it with rapture, and have thereby bartered among themselves an easy degree of obedience for the highest possible civil happiness. To render that covenant eternal, patriotism and political virtue must forever blaze — must blaze at the *present day* with superlative lustre; being watch'd, from *different motives*, by the eyes of all mankind. Nor must that patriotism be contracted to a single Commonwealth. A combination of the States is requisite to support them individually. "Unite or die" is our indispensable motto. Every step from it is a step nearer to

† Not that we can believe, with *some theoretical writers*, that individuals met together in a large plain, entered into an *original Contract*, &c. —

But though Society had not its formal beginning from any convention of individuals, &c. —

And this is what we mean by the original Contract of Society; which, though perhaps in no instance it has been *formally expressed*, at the first institution of a State, yet, &c. —

1st Blackstone's Com. p. 47. vid. the whole passage.

to the region of Death. This idea was never more occasional than at the present crisis—a crisis pregnant with Fate and ready to burst with calamity. I allude to that languor which, like a low hung cloud, overshadows a great part of the thirteen States. That the young, enterprizing America, who step'd out in the cause of humankind and, no other arm daring, lop'd the branches of wide despotic Empire—that the same America should now suffer a few insolent bands to ravage her borders with impunity—that her *now tardy* hand should suspend the finishing stroke of resentment, and leave to her *generous allies* a labor which her own vigor ought to effect—this must disturb those, illustrious, who fell in her infant exertions—this must stab the peace of the dead, however it may affect the hearts of the living. Oh could I bear a part among the means of awakening virtue—Oh could I call strength to these feeble lungs and borrow that note which shook the throne of Julius! Vain wish! If the silent suggestions of truth—if the secret whispers of reason are not sufficient—the efforts of human eloquence might be *futile*, her loudest bolt might roll *unheeded*!

THIS is not intended to inspire gloom; but only to persuade to those exertions which are necessary to life and independence. Let justice then be done to our country—Let justice be done to our great leader; and, the only means under heaven of our salvation, let his army be replenished. That grand duty over, we will once more adopt an enthusiasm sublime in itself, but still
more

more so as coming from the lips of a first patriot—the chief magistrate of this Commonwealth. “I have, said he, a most animating confidence that the present noble struggle for Liberty will terminate gloriously for America.” Aspiring to such a confidence,

I see the expressive leaves of Fate thrown wide ;
Of future times I see the mighty tide,
And, borne triumphant on its buoyant wave,
A god-like number of the great and brave.
The bright, wide ranks of martyrs—here they rise—
Heroes and patriots move before my eyes :
These crown'd with olive, those with laurel come,
Like the first fathers of immortal Rome.
Fly Time ! Oh lash thy fiery steeds away—
Roll rapid wheels and bring the smiling day,*
When these blest States, another promis'd land,
Chosen out and foster'd by the almighty hand,
Supreme shall rise—their crowded shores shall be
The fix'd abodes of Empire and of Liberty.

* Sun, gallop down the westlin skies,
Gang soon to bed and quickly rise ;
O lash your steeds, post Time away,
And haste about the bleezing day.

Allan Ramsay.

E N D.

1 AU66